

Guidance for Supporting Autistic Students in Schools

The Department of Education has developed comprehensive guidance to help schools support the needs of autistic students. This document was created collaboratively by NEPS, NCSE, MCA, and the Inspectorate, drawing on international expertise in autism education. It is intended for use in primary, post-primary, and special schools and classes.

The guidance outlines practical approaches that school leaders, teachers, and support staff can use to meet students' needs effectively and inclusively.

Chapter 1 — Background and User Guide

Chapter 1 introduces the purpose, context, and structure of the guidance. It outlines relevant background information and explains how school staff can use the document to enhance daily practice.

Chapter 2 — Understanding and Identifying Autism

This chapter explores factors that help schools understand autism and recognize the strengths and needs of autistic learners. It emphasizes informed, sensitive identification as a foundation for appropriate support.

Chapter 3 — Key Principles for Inclusive Practice

A set of core principles is presented to help schools create and maintain inclusive environments. These include whole-school autism-friendly approaches and person-centred planning.

Chapter 4 — Meeting Needs Across Eight Key Domains

This chapter provides guidance across eight domains: learning environment, language and communication, social development, emotional development, sensory processing, functional skills, academic development, and behaviour development.

Chapter 5 — A Closer Look

This chapter addresses additional areas such as anxiety, transitions, relationships and sexuality education, digital learning, assistive technology, and teacher professional learning.

Appendix

The appendix provides templates and resources to support implementation.